Abstract #56

A collaborative watershed assessment of the urban S. Platte River in Denver, Colorado

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Biographical Sketches of Authors

Philip Russell is employed as the Environmental Analyst at the Littleton/Englewood Wastewater Treatment Plant. His responsibilities include laboratory management, interaction with regulatory agencies on matters concerning analyses, and the development and implementation of research projects including watershed studies. He is currently active in the SPCURE board and monitoring committee. He is currently mentoring a WARE fellow from Bolivia on water sampling and analyses.

Cathy Shugarts serves as the Watershed Coordinator for the South Platte Coalition for Urban River Evaluation (SPCURE). Her role includes coordination of the coalition members with outside agencies to collaboratively address water quality issues and promote scientifically sound measures for monitoring and evaluating water quality in urban waterbodies.

Abstract

The South Platte River leaves the Rocky Mountains in near pristine condition and immediately flows through a high plains desert eco-region and urban Denver, Colorado. During its journey through the urban corridor it rapidly changes character. It slows, becomes impounded and channeled, and collects natural and anthropogenic pollutants.

In 1998 the South Platte Coalition for Urban River Evaluation (SPCURE) board was formed to study the urban watershed by a group of progressive utilities, communities and industries. State regulatory entities also participated. This group was initially formed to conduct a nitrate TMDL study of the urban South Platte River. The SPCURE board created a Monitoring Committee to coordinate the research effort and develop a sampling plan. The plan involved a "design-on-the-fly" approach. The coordinated monitoring effort evolved as data needs were identified and site-specific studies were implemented.

The data produced by this effort was essential to a TMDL Model. The model resulted in a nitrate mitigation plan initiated by a major point source contributor. The SPCURE success provides an excellent example, and potential model, for other watershed groups in the arid west.

Strategies that contributed to the collaborative success of the SPCURE included:

1. Initial delegation of technical coordination to a separate committee with appropriate responsibilities and authority to make decisions.
2. An emphasis on developing cooperation and collaboration vs. standardization
3. Using resources that are available and augmentation when possible.
4. Scheduling regular meetings and sampling/analyses events.
5. Keeping members informed of progress and maintaining contact.
6. Celebrating accomplishments.